

John 3.1-21

God so Loved the World!

Gospels Not REAL TIME TV // Camera Constantly Running on Life of Jesus

John the Apostle > AUTHOR and EDITOR (Redactor) > PURPOSE: Salvation

End Ch 2 Cleansing Temple – 2 X's? NO! Once! Defining Event > J = Temple

Jesus LIFE > 30 Something Years / MINISTRY > About 3 Years

Ch 1-12 Public Ministry / Ch 13-21 Private Ministry

Early Chpts JOHN > NEW Things thru the NEW Covenant of JESUS Messiah

Wedding > Wine of Xtianity REPLACED Waters of Judaism – **20/30 gallons**

Temple of Body of Jesus Replaced Temple Made by Man > to Meet GOD

1. Important Man

a. Representative v. 1 Now there was a *man*... Represent Us All B4 God

Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man. John 2.24-25

REPRESENTATIVE PRINCIPLE > Headship Principle > Central in Bible

God SEES HEARTS of All Men > Meet A NEW MAN > Quite a Good Man

b. Religion v. 1 a ruler of the Jews – Best Religion > God INVENTED IT

John picks Man MOST LIKELY to SUCCEED > Leading JEW > Nicodemus

First FOLLOWERS > 12 Apostles > NT Writers (possible excpt Luke) > JEWS

John was a JEW FOR JESUS > Wanted Fellow Jews to FIND HIM TOO!

// John's use of word 'JEW' > Refers to the Jew's of JUDEA, Establishment

SOUTH Americans > Call those in United States 'Yankees'

Citizens of USA > 'Yankee' > Americans from NORTH / or Baseball Team!

Nic Meets Greatest MAN: God in Human Flesh > Rabbi, Law-Keeping Jew

PASSIONATE CONCERN that Prompted John to Write this GOOD NEWS

John FAITHFULLY RECORDS Opposition Jesus met from Jewish LEADERS

But He also REPORTS those who CAME TO FAITH in Jesus their MESSIAH

Many of the Jews... had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him. John 11.45

Many of Jews were going over to Jesus & putting their faith in him. John 12.11

c. Reputation v. 1 named Nicodemus: Greek = 'one who conquers the people'

Most Jews in Judea: Jewish or Aramaic Names > Upper Class took Gk. Names

Hellenist > Classical Greek Education > Read OT AND Gk. PHILOSOPHY
 Jewish History: A WEALTHY, PROMINENT Nicodemus in Jerusalem THEN
 NOT CERTAIN that this Nicodemus is the SAME MAN > But Good Chance
 This Nic Very EXTRAVAGANT & EXPENSIVE Contribution to Jesus' Burial
 Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. John 19.39

d. Ritual v. 1 a man of the Pharisees / Boo & Hiss! BAD Pharisees in NT
 BEST of Jews > est. # 6000 > Select, Elite JEWISH BROTHERHOOD
 Kept Moses' 10 Commandments ADDED More than 500 of THEIR OWN
 SHOCKING WORDS of Jesus > For I tell you that unless your righteousness *surpasses that of the Pharisees* and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.
 Matthew 5.20

RECEIVED with COLLECTIVE GASP > Wow! Who could do THAT?!

e. Ruler v. 1 a ruler of the Jews > MEMBER of the SANHEDRIN
 Highest Organiz in Judaism > Legislative, Judicial, & Administrative Council
 SENT by COUNCIL? v. 2 'we know you are a teacher come from God'

f. Reading > Pharisees were GREAT STUDENTS of the LAW of GOD

v. 10 "You are Israel's teacher" / Lit. 'YOU are THE Teacher of Israel'

If we LIVED in CHRIST'S DAY > had to PICK a Man REPRESENT US

Nicodemus > Very GOOD CHOICE

Everyone Knew ROMAN RULERS were TERRIBLY CORRUPT

Greek Philosophers > Had LITTLE KNOWLEDGE of RELIGION

NOT CHOOSE Common Man, Poor Man, or Ignorant Man > Nicodemus

2. Ignorant Man

a. Helpless Nicodemus COMES with a COMPLIMENT v. 2 "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him."

JESUS > Never GRADUATED from THEIR SEMINARY > but 'Rabbi'

Other Jewish Leaders > MIRACLES ARE DEMONIC > Nic. 'God is with you'

Jesus tied His miracles to the truth of His message. He knew the human heart is attracted to the sensational...People who want His works but not His Word can never share His life.

‘Seeing is believing’ is not the Christian approach. First we believe; then we see. Miracles can only lead us to the Word, and the Word generates saving faith. Warren Wiersbe

If Jesus were TRYING to Climb Up Ladder of Jewish Religious Leadership

RESPECTFULLY & GRATEFULLY Acknowledge Praise of Respected Elder

Jesus Responds with Confrontation > SHAKE HIS SELF-SUFFICIENCY

vs. 3 Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Probably DAY-DREAMED about the THRONE he would SIT ON THERE

Jesus *‘Hold on Nic, don’t buy the Footstool for your Throne just yet!!’*

George Whitefield used by GOD in Revival in England & America / 1700’s

Preached +1,000 X’s from John 3.3: ‘At the age of 16 I began to fast twice in the week...prayed many times a day, received the sacrament every Lord's Day, fasting myself to death almost all the forty days of Lent, going no less than three times a day to public worship... seven times a day to private prayers, yet I knew no more that I needed to be born again, born a new creature in Christ Jesus, than if I was never born at all. Then by God's grace Charles Wesley put a book in my hand whereby God showed me that I must be born again or damned.’
George Whitefield

NIC was OLD & ESTABLISHED in my RELIGION > Not a Mere Novice

v. 4 "Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”

Jesus > LET ME REPEAT THIS NIC > TURN ON YOUR HEARING AID!

v. 5,6 Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Kingdom of God > NOT for HONORABLE but for the HELPLESS

BEING BORN > Not about US > We are just ALONG FOR THE RIDE

WATER?? > Embryonic FLUID > NEED Physical Birth AND Spiritual Birth

v. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’

IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE of Biblical Interpretation > Principle of History

Meaning of Text > What is Meant for Original AUDIENCE > Nicodemus

CANNOT Be > WATER from Jesus Side on Cross OR Christian BAPTISM

Because NEITHER Cross or Christian Baptism had OCCURRED YET

If they’d NOT Happened Jesus NO BASIS for REBUKING NIC’s Ignorance

Jewish Teachers spoke of GENTILE Converts to Judaism: Newborn Children

CONVERSION happened at their CEREMONIAL BAPTISM for Cleansing

Nicodemus COULD NOT IMAGINE that GOOD JEW Needed Conversion

The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.
1 Corinthians 2.14

b. **Powerless** vs. 8-10 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things

No man has power over the wind to contain it Ecclesiastes 8.8

We Know about the WIND > Delightful until it Disappears > Sweltering

Can't STOP it! NOR can we FIGURE it OUT!

Nicodemus's denseness makes him a foil for Jesus the revealer. Craig Keener

You SHOULD Know about SPIRITUAL THINGS > You are Israel's Teacher

BUT YOU KNOW ABOUT NEITHER the WIND nor the SPIRIT

Word Play > Hebrew and Greek > SAME WORD can mean 'wind' or 'spirit'

Nicodemus Should have KNOWN > Life-Giving Power of GOD'S WIND

Should KNOW THE MESSAGE OF THE PROPHETS

...the Spirit of the LORD set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones...He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I said, "O Sovereign LORD, you alone know." Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life...' This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come from the four winds, O breath...So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet - a vast army. Ezekiel 37.1-10

Why I Pray before I PREACH: God must BREATH Life on our Dead Bones!

c. **Lifeless** - Jesus reminds Nicodemus of DARK DAY in History of ISRAEL

On Journey to Promise Land: Moses led thru some very Inhospitable Territory ...the people grew impatient on the way; they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!" Then the LORD sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us." So Moses prayed for the people. The LORD said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; *anyone who is bitten can look at it and live*" Num 21.4-8

Look @ Bronze Snake? Is that all?? What can WE DO for OURSELVES?

SALVATION = Cannot HELP OURSELVES: 'Save Me' Gasp of Drowning

vs. 14,15 As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have *eternal life*.

d. **Darkness** v. 2 “this man came to Jesus by night” > Work Day? Shame?

The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it John 1.5

Driving at Night > Car coming at you with BRIGHT LIGHTS > Real Problem

Driving by Day > Same Car, Same Brights in DAYLIGHT > No Problem

Pharisees looked like BRIGHT LIGHTS in MORAL DARKNESS of that Day

BUT when Jesus Came, Sun of Righteousness Rose > Pharisees Light Dimmed

Wanted His Light Extinguished > Kill Him > EXPOSED their Corruption

vs. 19-20 this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed”

SINNERS LOVE the DARKNESS > Persist in their EVIL DEEDS

NOT Intellectual Problems that KEEP PEOPLE Away from Jesus > MORAL

People are NOT IGNORANT Needing INSTRUCTION,

Nor MISGUIDED Needing DIRECTION,

Nor PSYCHOLOGICALLY Damaged Needing THERAPY

Nor SICK Needing MEDICATION

PEOPLE ARE DEAD AND NEED RESURRECTION > A New Birth

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. John 3.36

3. Invited Man

Only an EYEWITNESS of Heaven can FULLY TESTIFY about HEAVEN

Moses ASCENDED to a Mountain Top > Jesus dwells in HEAVEN ITSELF

vs. 12,13 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.

a. **Birth** – You MUST be Born Again > YOU CAN BE Born Again

Letter to Benj Franklin: “I find that you grow more and more famous in the learned world. As you have made such progress in investigating the mysteries of electricity, I now humbly urge you to give diligent heed to the mysteries of the new birth. It is a most important and interesting study and, when mastered, will richly repay you for your pains.” Geo Whitefield

v. 5 Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God”

If Water our Baptism? > Something WE DO > Point: WE ARE HELPLESS

"I did my part, and God did His part: I did the sinning and God did the saving."
Old Preacher describing Salvation

AGAIN...Nicodemus SHOULD HAVE KNOWN > Meaning found in OT

"I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. Ezekiel 36.24-28

NEW BORN > Legally Severed from OLD Relationships

CANNOT ARREST a BABY > No Past > No Record > No Guilt

b. Breath – God Breathes NEW LIFE by His SPIRIT into HIS PEOPLE

vs. 8-11 Jesus: ' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.' Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony.

Nic > SCEPTICAL > 'I never met anyone with this SPIRIT BIRTH'

... children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.
 John 1.12,13

c. Belief – INVITATION to LOOK > Place FAITH in 'Lifted Up' JESUS

14-17 As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved thru him"

NT writers coined a new Greek word - describe God's Love AGAPE

Agape RARELY USED in other Greek lit. - meaning is vague, unclear

Gk & Roman gods Lusted after Women / BUT NEVER LOVED SINNERS

NT meaning of Agape - love for undeserving, unlovely, unwanted

LIFTED UP > Dual Meaning > CRUCIFIED and GLORIFIED

The cross was not the end of Jesus' glory; it was the means of His glory. Warren Wiersbe

Jesus: 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified...But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.' He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.
John 12.23,32-33

The cross is a pulpit from which Christ preached the Love of God to the world.

There are many things that separate true Christianity from other religions of this world, but the most important is that Christianity is not a 'works' religion... Christianity insists that we cannot earn anything, that all that can possibly be done has been done for us by the Lord Jesus Christ.
James Boice

d. Being Transformed > Called OUT of Darkness into Marvelous Light

Text creatively WEAVES themes of LIGHT and DARKNESS

Darkness: Place Hostile to GOD & His Purposes > 'Do NOT love the world'

v. 21 whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

John 3.16 "God so loved the DARK WORLD of LOST REBELS

World - NOT JUST ROTATING SPHERE HANGING IN OUTER SPACE

"World" - enemy territory / dwelling place of rebels against God

Nicodemus moved from Darkness of Confusion to Daylight of Confession:

Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus...He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who had earlier visited Jesus at night. John 19.38

1. If you died tonight, would you go to heaven? Most "*By your GRACE*"

2. If God asked WHY should I let you into Heaven? "*thru Your SON!*"

Psalm 92 It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; // **to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night,** // to the music of the lute and the harp, to the melody of the lyre. // **For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy.** // How great are your works, O Lord! Your thoughts are very deep! // **The stupid man cannot know; the fool cannot understand this:** // that though the wicked sprout like grass and all evildoers flourish, // **they are doomed to destruction forever; but you, O Lord, are on high forever.** // For behold, your enemies, O Lord, // **for behold, your enemies shall perish; all evildoers shall be scattered.** // But you have exalted my horn like that of the wild ox; you have poured over me fresh oil. // **My eyes have seen the downfall of my enemies; my ears have heard the doom of my evil assailants.** // The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. // **They are planted in the house of the Lord; they flourish in the courts of our God.** // They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green, // **to declare that the Lord is upright; he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.**

Amen and Amen.